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Kalm, Sara

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Migration Control Policies as Spatial Organization – Mobility, Power and Geopolitical Imaginations

Sara Kalm
Department of Political Science
Lund University, Sweden

Over the last decade or so, many commentators have tried to make sense of the developments that characterize the world after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the crumbling of the Soviet Union. Many are the attempts; to paint a comprehensive picture of the overall developments commonly referred to as “globalization”, and the resulting visions are certainly varied. Common features nevertheless include increased economic interdependence, the emergence of a single world market in the fields of capital, finance and traded goods, and increased interconnectedness resulting from cheaper and faster transportation, the global reach of media and the new communication and information technology. What all this signals; is that globalization to no small degree is conceptualized in terms of a *spatial* reorganization including the decreasing importance of state borders, and of territory more generally. For instance, Kenichi Ohmae (1990) has brought forward the notion of an emerging “borderless world”, Richard Rosecrance (1999) celebrates what he calls “the emancipation from land” in the era of the “virtual state” and Richard O’Brien (1992) has launched the “End of Geography”-thesis, claiming that the forces of economic integration and technological innovations renders distances as well as geopolitical borders irrelevant. A recurring theme in these narratives of globalization is the increased *mobility* of people, capital, and information, often conceptualized as “flows”, across these ever more redundant borders.

The limitations to this argument are evident when one turns to international migration and immigration controls, but these issues are conspicuously absent from most “mainstream” accounts of globalization. Whereas borders might be losing much of their previous military and economic relevance this development is paralleled by re-bordering practices in the immigration control field. States may be

giving up sovereignty when it comes to precisely military and economic issues, but this coincides with a reassertion of the sovereign right to regulate who is to cross its borders. This is especially conspicuous in the increasingly restrictive control practices of the affluent states and regions in the world (Andreas 2000). Focusing on the more restrictive migration control practices, critics talk about “Fortress Europe” and “Tortilla Curtain” concerning the cases of Europe and the U.S. respectively, about a “Wall” being erected around the West (Andreas – Snyder et al: 2000), and of an emerging “global apartheid” (cf. Dalby 1999; Richmond 1994; Alexander 1996; Tesfahuney 2001).

So, how are we to grasp this seeming contradiction in current developments? How can it be that migration controls persist and even are reinforced in an era which is usually described as de-territorializing? How are migration controls to be conceptualized within the current order, and how is this related to power? In political science, migration control policy is usually analysed on the domestic level and considered the outcome of negotiations between actors with different interests. Typically, power is then reduced to the relative strengths of these actors. In my view, it is important also to interrogate into the role of migration control on the global level, and especially from a North-South perspective. I have therefore chosen to approach migration control from a slightly different angle by making use of concepts and theories from critical and postmodern geography as well as sociology. The main suggestion of this paper is that the simultaneous co-existence of de-bordering and re-bordering processes can be understood if taking broader geopolitical imaginations into account.

Firstly, however, I connect migration control to the broader geographical notion of mobility. Migration control policies legitimize and authorize certain types of mobility while others are effectively criminalized. Through empirical illustrations, it is argued that mobility rights – the access to legitimate movement as well as control over the terms of this movement – is unevenly distributed over the world, and that this is of vital importance since mobility is becoming “the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or post-modern times” (Bauman 1998: 2). The advantage with situating migration and migration control as one aspect of “mobility” is that it underscores that migration control cannot be studied in isolation from other ongoing processes, and it makes possible the comparison between different sorts of movement. Understanding mobility as a power factor also inserts migration control into global power relations that is often absent from political science texts on migration control. It is believed that the organization of space through migration control not only reflects global power relations, but also reinforces them (cf. Delaney 2002).

As Brah et al (1997: 7) point out, “it is important always to be aware of power-relations both as they are played out in the social sphere and as they are embedded within the power-knowledge system which our ways of imagining, conceptualizing and theorizing construct”. In the second part I try to connect the differentiated mobility rights to geopolitical conceptualizations, which are understood as

inherently political (cf. Dalby 1999: 135). It is argued that there are two main ways of understanding space that in some ways contradict each other but nevertheless are alive and well in popular imagination. The first one is the globalist imagination of de-territorialization and unbounded space, of “space as flows”, shortly accounted for in the introduction of this paper. The second is the essentialist imagination of space as ruptured and divided into bounded entities, of “space as places”. This is an imagination of nationalism, of defensible places, and of having a “natural” home in the world. It is suggested that these two understandings of space are called upon in turn, that they are used to legitimize different sorts of action, and that they together tend to weaken the already weak.

This paper is delimited in some important respects. While I do criticize migration control measures, I do not offer a comprehensive account of the politico-normative debate on this issue¹. Furthermore, the empirical evidence used to illustrate this mainly theoretical investigation primarily consists of European and other Western asylum and migration policies and their consequences. Other parts of the world also employ migration restrictions that surely can be just as criticized, but these are not covered in this paper. Moreover, since I am trying to gain an understanding of state policies my perspective is necessarily “from above”. My focus is hence the representations of space prominent in a Western context. The way people on a local basis react to, transform and resist these discursive imaginings could certainly provide material for many important and interesting studies but it is not the subject of this paper.

Mobility and power

Alongside the emerging planetary dimensions of business, finance, trade and information flows, a ‘localizing’, space-fixing process is set in motion. Between them, the two closely interconnected processes sharply differentiate the existential conditions of whole populations and of various segments of each one of the populations. What appears as globalization for some means localization for others; signalling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate. Mobility climbs to the rank of the uppermost among the coveted values – and the freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times (Bauman 1998: 2).

There is no denying that the globalization processes mentioned in the beginning of this paper really are taking place. However, we must be careful not to generalize about their effects. According to Paolini (1997) there has been a general tendency in most accounts of globalization to assume (explicitly or implicitly) that these processes tend towards homogeneity. To counter this, there is a need to be attentive to the social differentiation in the experience of the ongoing developments – to take

¹ This is a matter of intense normative dispute. See, for instance, Carens (1987); Cole (2000); Dummett (2001); Gibney (1986); Walzer (1983); Barry – Goodin (eds.) (1992).

into account the “power-geometries of time-space” (Massey 1999; cf. Massey 1994: 149). The decreased importance of territory and state borders, so central in many accounts of the spatial reorganization of globalization, is really only *one* possible experience of ongoing processes. This is because the social relations of space are experienced differently by people and groups holding different positions in relation to it (Massey 1994: 3).

What is suggested here is that mobility is a question of power, and that it becomes increasingly so as a consequence of the tendency towards globalization. According to Bauman, all known societies have been stratified, and one way to tell one society from another is by the dimensions along which it stratifies its members. In our world, *mobility* is becoming the most important stratifying dimension. It is the differences in mobility rights, conceived of as the access to legitimate movement as well as control over the terms of this movement, that determine the new polarization. In Bauman’s words: “[m]obility and its absence designate the new, late-modern or postmodern polarization of social conditions. The top of the new hierarchy is exterritorial; its lower ranges are marked by varying degrees of space constraints” (Bauman 1998: 105).

Underlying this is the asymmetry in mobility rights between capital and labour; “[o]ne of the most notable, yet least noticed characteristics of the inequality within the current type of globalization (Massey 1999: 37)”. Capital, in the forms of investment, financial transactions and traded goods, is moving ever more freely over the globe and is encouraged to do so under the sign of “free trade”. Moreover, the free trade regime is institutionally manifest in the WTO, and there have also at least been attempts at establishing a multilateral forum to deregulate investments through the MAI-treaty. However, a multilateral forum to do away with the barriers to the free trade in labour has so far not been established – although this would probably expand the world economy more than the deregulation of any other good on the WTO agenda (Rodrik 2002). As Mike Haynes has aptly noted: “in these terms labour power is not a commodity like any other – it is inferior to the tin of beans, the machine, the dollar bill” (1999: 26). Compared to the movement of capital, the movement of labour is much more regulated and controlled. People are, of course, still moving in search for better opportunities, but they are often obliged to do it illegally and take on the considerable risks associated with this type of movement.

What is “new”, according to Bauman (1998: 9ff), is that the mobility of capital implies unheard-of possibilities to exercising power from a distance and to shed responsibility for consequences for those at the “upper end” of the mobility stratum. At the receiving end, this means decreased power to control even the locality from which these less mobile people have little chance of escaping. In terms of North-South relations this is especially evident in the power over national economies that is exercised by predominantly “Northern” institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank through structural adjustment programs, as a consequence of “Southern” countries’ debt burdens.

It is important to keep in mind the unequal relationship between capital and labour in terms of mobility. For the rest of this paper, however, I will primarily focus on the differential mobility rights of *people*. As stated before, people are positioned differently in relation to the mobility dimension. However, these positions are not solely attributable to class relations, but are also a product of other power relations, such as gender and race. Here, I will look at the social differentiation of mobility, which relates directly to migration and migration control. In the following, I will present a (necessarily brief) overview of mobility rights.

Stratification of mobility rights

If it is true that mobility is becoming the most important stratifying dimension in global relations today, and that different mobility rights is the sign of a new polarization – then it becomes vital to figure out at what positions along the mobility dimension different groups are located. Moreover, from a political science perspective it is of special importance to trace how different institutional practices affect this same dimension. Migration policies of various kinds are certainly central here, but cannot – as stated above – be seen in isolation from other policies, especially those connected to the global economy. Below, I will only offer a very brief empirical overview, which should by no means be taken as comprehensive.

“Mobility rights” relates directly to access to movement (cf. Hyndman 2004), but it is also about *control*, about power in relation to the terms of that movement. Some are more in charge of the flows and the movements, while others are effectively imprisoned by it. Perhaps mobility rights are best thought of as a continuum with the most and the least mobile at the endpoints. Very simplified, however, there are three main positions that groups and individuals can occupy in terms of mobility (cf. Massey 1994: 149f).

First, at the upper end of the strata are those doing the moving and communicating and who are in some way in a position of control in relation to it: the ones doing the investments and currency transactions and who are able to turn this new freedom of mobility to their advantage – the cosmopolitan “international jet-setters” (Massey 1994: 149) or “club-class migrants” (Brah et al 1997: 6). These are often businessmen or high-level professionals, employed within the core sectors of the world economy. This position also includes others from the Western elites, such as journalists and academics – that is, those who write about globalization (Massey 1994: 149f). However, it is important to note that even within this privileged group people travel with various degrees of ease. Top academics of colour are probably more likely than their white colleagues to meet with suspicion in customs and passport controls, as has been recounted by bell hooks (cf. Tesfahuney 1998).

Apart from Western elites, citizens of Third World countries who have managed to get work permits in rich countries because of their professional skills also have a strong position in relation to the mobility dimension – at least as long as their skills are still asked for. Countering the general trend towards more restrictive policies towards low-skilled labour migration in the rich countries, this sort of migration has increased over the last decade, which has led Nigel Harris (2002: 41) to conclude

that "the underlying principle of this approach is that the world of migration is only for the professional and highly skilled, a privilege for the elite. Those counted as unskilled are to be tied, like serfs, to the soil of their homeland".

The international jet-set of today is preceded by the elites of yesterday. The rich and the powerful seem always to have been travelling more than the rest of the population, and borders have not to any significant degree inhibited their movement. Bauman (1998: 10) talks about "the absentee landlords of yore", who were notorious for neglecting the populations who maintained them. The sole interest these elites held in the land they owned, and often left behind, was limited to living off the surplus it produced. At times, these elites also created a trans-border culture of their own, having more in common with elites across borders than with the rest of the population inside them. Not only was travelling reserved for the privileged elites, it was at times also considered an *ideal*. In Enlightenment thinking, travelling was thought of as contributing to education and moral refinement. In Rousseau's thought, travelling was a requirement for knowledge and the ability to think 'universally'. The ever resident people, by contrast, spent their entire life in the same village, knew nothing about the surrounding world and could therefore not even properly know themselves. Since they had nothing to compare with, and thought their own lifestyle was the only conceivable one, these people were to him "barbarians" compared to the moral superiority of the traveller (Jonsson 1995: 45f). This way of thinking echoes the way young Westerners are encouraged to travel in order to reach self-realization by getting to know themselves as well as distant peoples and places, whereas most of the world's population have no possibility of living this ideal. Now, like in the days of Rousseau, being able to travel freely seems to be a privilege of the well-to-do. To repeat, what is "new", according to Bauman (1998: 9ff), is that the mobility of capital implies unheard-of possibilities to exercising power from a distance and to shed responsibility for consequences.

In the *second* position are the groups of people who do the physical movement but who are not in charge of it in the same way. Most obvious here is the heterogeneous group of "illegal" or "undocumented" immigrants, comprised of people who may or may not have legitimate asylum reasons for their movement.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, all Western European countries adopted policies to put an end to labour migration. It is probably true that this forced some "economic migrants" into the asylum channel, since that was the only one open for legal entry (Koser 2001: 60). In turn, this has fed the suspicion that asylum-seekers are really "only" economic migrants. They are often frowned upon and do not seldom experience discrimination and racism. In any case, the tighter asylum policies have in their turn forced also desperate people with "real" asylum reasons to enter Europe illegally together with others (Morrison – Crosland 2001), thereby often laying their lives in the hands of smugglers.

Every year large numbers of people get killed when they illegally try to enter Europe. A Dutch organization calculated that 1574 people died between 1993 and

2000 – drowned in rivers or at sea, frozen to death or suffocated in the back of trucks. This just concerns documented cases and should probably be seen as a considerable underestimation. According to other estimations, the sum of deaths is the double or triple (Stalker 2001: 52ff; 130f). Still, many people manage to get in, and there are probably around 3 million undocumented immigrants in the EU area (ibid: 11). Many observations show that there is a demand for this particular workforce precisely because of their undocumented status and lack of legal rights. These people often end up in the secondary labour market where they hold the so-called 3D-jobs (Dirty, Difficult and Dangerous), often in agriculture or construction, which are rejected by the demanding and more educated native workforces (Stalker 2000). It is important to note that these people are important economic contributors, not only to the host economy, but to the sending economy as well. In Mexico, for instance, remittances from workers are the third largest source of foreign exchange. World net inflow of remittances to developing countries in 2002 was estimated to around \$U.S. 80 billion, not counting the informal flows. This is 2-3 times more than total overseas development assistance (Ramamurthy 2003: 10).

The work that women migrants perform requires special mentioning here. Domestic and sexual services are probably the most notable. Agathangelou (2002) claims that an important feature of globalization is precisely the sexualization and commodification of female migrant labour and the “accelerating exchange of money for bodies”. According to her, domestic and sexual services are central to capital accumulation and the demand for these services is intimately connected to the emerging transnational class of professionals. An odd but perhaps telling example of women migrants is that the Philippine state has started “mail-order-bride”-companies to facilitate and rationalize the export of young women to men in rich countries. These women send home about \$US 1 billion each year from the Gulf nations, Europe and the U.S. and are therefore important contributors to the national economy (Khosravi 2004).

A lot of the joint efforts of European states aim at ending human smuggling and preventing illegal immigration. But it is likely that illegal immigration will continue as long as there is demand for this work. Probably, the only thing that would end this sort of movement is a serious recession and high rates of unemployment in Europe (Harris 2002: 50). What concerns human smuggling, as awful and inhumane this business may be, it too will probably continue as long as there is demand for its service. According to Kyle and Koslowski (2001), the smuggling is exacerbated by a variety of problems such as social inequality, state corruption, and ethnic and gender discrimination. But it is also connected to the differentiated mobility rights: “human smuggling is not so much a disease but a symptom of the enormous contemporary disparities in the legitimate mobility of the world’s peoples during, ironically, the historical apex of mutual global awareness and interconnectedness”(ibid: 23).

So, in contrast to the former one, this group of migrants travel illegally and at their own risk, are not seldom met with suspicion, and sometimes arrested and deported upon arrival (cf. Bauman 1998: 89).

The *third* position is comprised of those who do not do any cross-border moving at all, and who are more or less imprisoned by the same processes that allow other people (and production factors) to move. European states employ a variety of measures to limit immigration of the “unwanted”, among them a more assertive control of the external border. The kind of policies that most obviously restrict movement, are however, the “remote control” measures.

Zolberg (1999) uses the term “remote control” to denote immigration policies designed to deter immigration by regulating departure at or near the point of origin. The origin of this system of control is the elaboration and universalization of a visa regime. By requiring visas, the control procedure is located in the prospective immigrants’ home country, which greatly diminishes the number of people who will turn up at the actual border. In recent years the system of remote control policies has become much more complex. Guiraudon and Lahav (2000) list a range of such activities, aimed at preventing departure: information campaigns to deter potential migrants, visa requirements, carrier sanctions, liaisons with foreign control authorities, physical interception of people travelling with fraudulent documents, and the establishment of “buffer zones” beyond national borders. There are also more “indirect” measures to hinder people from leaving: development aid, foreign direct investment, and the reduction of trade barriers (Brochmann 1999: 14) sometimes serve this purpose, especially when these “goods” are granted only in exchange for the tightening of the barriers to exit.

A major problem with remote control policies is precisely their defining feature – their aim of preventing departure. This is perhaps especially grave when it comes to asylum seekers – because to get classified as a refugee a person has to cross an international border and apply for asylum, and these policies aim at preventing people from doing so. This is why this type of policies has been severely criticized by human rights organizations, as well as journalists and academics.

When it comes to visa requirements, it is quite obvious that persecuted people are often not in a good position for obtaining visas. Many times, they are lucky if they have passports at all (Dummett 2001: 125). Nevertheless, European countries have often used visa requirements as an instrument to reduce the number of asylum seekers in the midst of a refugee-generating crisis². With the harmonization of the Schengen countries’ asylum and immigration policy, member countries increasingly have coordinated their visa requirements. At the moment people from 133 countries in the world need visa to enter an EU country. Most of them are located in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East (UD 2004).

² Great Britain, for instance, demanded visas from Iranians and Sri Lankan people in 1985. Sweden, for its part, introduced visa requirements for people from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993 (Hammar 1999: 182). This severely diminished the flows - from a total of 84000 asylum-seekers in 1992, to 34000 in 1993.

Another type of “remote control” policy that has received a lot of criticism is carrier sanctions – that is, the fining of transport companies (notably airlines) that carry individuals lacking documents necessary for admission. With carrier sanctions, airlines officers are obliged to make sure that each passenger possesses sufficient documents for admission before bordering, and also – often but not always – that s/he has enough funds for a return ticket. Apart from the fact that a central state matter is thus carried out by private actors, it is also a way to execute the implementation of immigration control near the source of origin. Which – once again – will also prevent many “real refugees” from arriving³.

This third group of non-travellers is not only comprised of would-be refugees. Would-be labour migrants who are not allowed to move in search for work, and who do not have the resources to travel illegally are also included here. Following Bauman’s argument, these people are essentially powerless because in the era of time-space compression, immobility is the mark of the excluded. Not only are they barred from movement, they may also have lost control over their local affairs, for instance in the economic sense developed above (cf. Bauman 1998: 113).

This crude list is by no means complete, so the categories above should be considered merely illustrative. There is a variety of reasons for movement, and thus potentially many categories of migrants that are not accounted for. There is also a great deal of regulations controlling people’s movement which are not taken into account. Restrictions on third country nationals to move within the EU and the different restrictions on movement that the older EU countries have imposed on citizens of the new member states are two examples. Also, there is a specific form of immobility caused by the stricter immigration policies – those who manage to get inside illegally tend to stay inside since they risk not being successful if they try it again. Moreover, some groups of people are not easily placed along this mobility continuum. How is one, for instance, to place ordinary non-elite citizens of the western world? It could be argued that their movement, like that of citizens of less-privileged states, is conditioned across the axes of race (Teshfahune 1998; Gilmore 2002; Delaney 2002), gender and class (Massey 1994; Hyndman 2004), that most of them do not have the means for mobility nor are in a position of control over that movement. On the other hand, they do enjoy considerable privileges as a result of having had the fortune to be born in the “right” country. According to Carens (1987), this accidental birth situation gives a person undeserved privileges that are irreconcilable with liberal philosophy. Citizenship in any of the Western democracies is to him “...the modern equivalence of feudal privilege – an inherited status that greatly enhances one’s life chances”. Returning to the mobility as power argument, it can be stated that citizenship in a rich country gives power in relation to

³ In 2000, 3651 people arrived to Arlanda airport in Stockholm without proper passports and documentations. Of these, 569 were granted asylum and around 1800 were allowed to stay in the country for humanitarian reasons. Less than 30% had their asylum applications turned down and were deported (Wirtén 2002: 17). With carrier sanctions, these would most likely not have arrived at all.

those who do not have it. The employment of exploitable undocumented workers, the possibility to economize by buying the hence cheaply produced products, and the possibility to buy a “mail-order-bride” are some instances when this relation of power is most evident. Because of the development towards more stratified mobility, the holding of a citizenship or a work permit in the rich western world becomes even more valuable. Khosravi (2004) even suggests that the ownership of a citizenship or a work permit in the rich western world today might be as important a class question as the conventional ownership of capital.

Not denying the importance of class, gender and racial factors, what concerns me most here is how mobility is shaped by institutional practices that manage the access to mobility. And as such, there are not many institutional barriers to the movement of ordinary citizens of Western countries. Western people have the (at least formal) possibility to travel almost completely as they wish, and can expect to be welcomed practically everywhere. Also, a great deal of migration actually takes place within the Western world. What concerns the European Union, freedom of movement for citizens is guaranteed and motivated with reference to human rights. Extra-EU migration, by contrast, is severely controlled and guarded by the opposite philosophy of internal security (Joppke 1998: 21). So, these “ordinary citizens” definitely belong at the upper end of the mobility dimension.

One thing to be remembered from this section is the unequal relationship between capital and labour in terms of mobility. Whereas the first is allowed to move around the globe with few restrictions, the second is reduced, managed and controlled. The international migration that still remains is clearly segregated and mobility is unequally distributed over the world according to nationality, class, gender and race. Even those whose mobility is unwanted keep moving, of course, but are controlled and often have to do it illegally. There are two contrary tendencies at work here; the consequences of economic globalization in its neoliberal guise increase pressure on people to move in search for work, yet the intensification of global market forces are accompanied by greater restrictions on this movement. Whereas mobility has perhaps always been a class signifier, what is “new” is the increased possibilities for those “high-up” to shed consequences for their actions, thus leaving the “low-downs” behind. The latter has of course no such possibility since their movement is restricted and controlled⁴. The differentiated access to, and control over mobility is thus not only about unequal distribution, but also has the consequences of weakening the already weak (Massey 1994: 150).

To further the understanding of how such a differentiated system of mobility rights can persist in an “era of globalization”, I will now discuss the two main geopolitical imaginations that influence and shape thought as well as political action.

⁴ Perhaps the most ironic illustration of western business interests in relation to movement restrictions is the arms sale to countries from which refugees are later sometimes barred. It has been estimated that 65% of asylum seekers coming to Sweden 1983-1994 were from the ten countries in war to which Sweden exported arms during the same period (Tsfahuney 2001: 194).

Two geopolitical imaginations

Our understandings and imaginations of the world guide and shape our thoughts and actions. When it comes to geopolitics, there are two especially influential imaginations (Massey 1999). The first one – “space as flows” is already introduced in the beginning of this paper. Here, I will merely focus on the critique of this vision. The second imagination is the essentialist understanding of the relationship between people and places. What is suggested is that these contradictory imaginations legitimize different types of actions, and it is argued that the position of a group on the mobility dimension is (at least partly) connected to the interplay between these different imaginations or discourses.

Globalization – “space as flows”

‘Globalization’ as a vision of unbounded space and uninhibited mobility is one of the most powerful terms in our geographical and social imaginations. Like all other descriptions of reality, the “globalization vision” is certainly a political one. Not denying that the processes described above really are taking place, critics claim that as a comprehensive description it is exaggerated and ethnocentric. For instance, Paolini (1997: 42) argues that proponents of this vision tend to concentrate on certain developments in the developed world and assume that these processes are occurring in a similar fashion elsewhere as well. “Like most theory of a predominantly Western orientation, it picks up certain processes and developments pertaining to the First World and magnifies them beyond their specifically Western context”. An example of this is the idea that globalization entails a stretching of social relations over vast distances, thus bringing different peoples and cultures closer to each other. This mirrors a Western experience of “the rest” arriving in “the West” as something rather new (Hall 1992a). For formerly colonized societies, however, this meeting with the exotic stranger cannot seem very new. In his overview of how the Third World is conceptualized within the hegemonic discourses on globalization, Paolini claims that the implicit assumption usually is that these processes are homogenous and comprehensive (1997: 69). The Third World is either omitted from these accounts of globalization, or it is included on someone else’s terms (cf. Persaud 2002). Certainly, societies in the Third World are affected by the processes in question, but the reception and the consequences of them are not uniform over the globe. One of the problems with this vision of globalization, then, is that it only mirrors the reality of a small minority of the world’s population but is presented as a neutral, objective truth. What we have here, then, is a problem of positionality in relation to power/knowledge, in that globalization as “space as flows” is premised on developments that are especially conspicuous in one specific part of the world, in contrast to its global aspirations. Moreover, this might at least in part be related to the fact that those who have formulated the globalization vision – western academics and journalists – themselves are positioned on the upper level of the mobility dimension.

Although globalization in this vision is often depicted as a spatial reorganization, Doreen Massey (1997) claims that this vision is not truly spatialized. Because of a

lack of specification and a lack of analysis of its causes (apart from technological determinism), this version of economic globalization is often considered inevitable. And in this perceived inevitability it has become something similar to a “grand narrative” of our days. What this does, among other things, is to imagine spatial differences as temporal. For instance, the countries which are not yet drawn into the community of free trade and instantaneous communication are often thought of as lagging behind, eventually having to surrender to the forces of globalization: the possibilities of alternative developments are not considered an option. In this way it is reminiscent of modernity’s story of progress which had the same aura of inevitability and also signified a victory of time over space. In this “story”, it was western progress and development which were celebrated. Failing to understand non-Western societies, and the inability to imagine difference in other societies as potentially leading to different types of developments, all societies were thought of as progressing along a single continuum, divided into a series of stages with the European model on top. Other (colonized) societies were thus considered “backward” as compared to the West. This provided the impetus for civilization missions, since it was thought the moral responsibility of those at a more advanced stage to provide assistance to those lagging behind. By providing a negative mirror-image of the West the imagined “Other” also contributed to the production of Western identity (cf. Hall 1992b: 312ff; Jonsson 1995: 105). This way, spatial difference was reduced to temporal difference in the story of modernity. Simultaneously, other “temporalities” – other imaginations of progress and development, for instance – were also precluded. This has its counterpart in the way “globalization” (in its Western form) is often imagined as inevitably progressing and including ever more regions and countries. According to Massey, what is often forgotten is that economic globalization can take a variety of different forms, and that economics itself is a discourse. This has to be remedied by taking geographical differences seriously. To envision different kinds of developments, other temporalities – there must be space.

Apart from its ethnocentrism and its lack of true spatiality then, this vision is also political in that it legitimizes certain political and economic actions in spite of its limited anchoring in reality. It corresponds well to the current ‘free trade discourse’, a discourse which is predominantly produced in the developed “North” part of the globe and embodied in international institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. The understanding of the world as a future global trading place also legitimizes the various measures associated with the imposition of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) on countries in the “South”. These measures include among other things export orientation, decreased public spending and privatizations, and have had well-known effects of social polarization and increased hardship for the already poor, especially women. This vision of globalization also has had effects in the “North”, like the cut-down of social welfare programs and the surrendering of state control over the markets of capital and finance, often explained by the need to become more competitive because of the pressures from globalization. So, this vision of globalization is both political to its content and to its effects. In the words of Doreen Massey: “This vision of neo-liberal globalization, then, is not so much a

description of how the world is, as an image in which the world is being made. But this vision once having been raised, and installed as hegemonic, provides the context for the actions of others. In particular, it provides the excuse for *inaction* (1999: 36).”

Geopolitics of belonging – “space as places”

The second influential geopolitical imagination has its roots in the process of modernization. One of the consequences of modernity was that the nation-state form of governance got universalized across the globe. But the nation-state was only one aspect of a more general way of imagining cultures and societies, and their relation to space. Space, in this vision, is considered as divided, ruptured, and consisting of separate bounded components – of places. Places, in turn, are thought of as firmly bounded, fixed and unchanging locations with their own internally generated authentic identity. (Massey 1999: 29f; cf. Dwyer – Jones III 2000). Furthermore, this “essentialist” understanding of space (Brun 2001) is accompanied by an essentialist understanding of culture as separate and discrete entities corresponding to particular places (Olwig - Hastrup 1997). In this geopolitical imagination, there is supposedly an essential relationship between people and places, so that everyone has a “natural” home in the world. This conception of space as divided is connected to “having roots” and of belonging – of belonging to a particular place and having that place belonging to oneself. It is an imagination of defensible places, of the right of “local people” to their own “local places”. In the strictest form, this imagination allows for no places to be “multicultural”.

Perhaps this understanding of places and cultures as bounded and homogenous can be thought of as a way of bringing intellectual order into an otherwise disorderly world (Olwig – Hastrup 1997), perhaps it can be related to a greater scheme of modernist/“white” epistemology (Dwyer – Jones III 2000); perhaps it can be explained by reference to object-relations theory (Massey 1994; Sibley 1995). In any case, it is astonishing that this view, establishing a “natural” connection between people, territory and political organization, took hold under a period when millions of people were engaged in Euro-American and intra-European migration, as well as the slave trade, in an era “when the facts so massively spoke of the mobility of people, the mutability of boundaries, the mongrelarity of nations and the specular artificiality of the state” (Dillon 1999: 109). Taking account of the massive amount of people who for generations have had to move or flee, or who have been forcibly removed because of slave trade or colonization and sometimes more than once, the somewhat nostalgic idea of having a home-place where one belongs is certainly not based on universal experience (Massey 1994: 166). In spite of reality, then, this imagination is still very influential⁵.

⁵ The essentialist conception of place and culture has long been questioned within various disciplines, and the links between people, identities and places have been de-naturalized theoretically (cf. Olwig-Hastrup 1997). Massey (1994), for instance understands space and place as created through social relations. Space is the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations at all spatial scales, from the most local to the most global level. Place is then a particular articulation of those relations, a particular moment in these networks of social relations. The place (or the identity

This specific geopolitical imagination works in two directions. Since it normalizes the construction of localities as belonging to the people who “have roots” there, it legitimizes the state’s right to control the movement over their territory. As Helga Leitner (1995: 261) observes, “debates over immigration generally start with the premise that every state has the right to control the admission of foreigners”. This is considered central to state sovereignty, to the extent that Torpey, travestying Weber, suggests that the state should be defined as the agency claiming “monopoly on the legitimate means of movement” (Torpey 2000). So it seems that whereby former central state powers, such as control over the national economy, are relinquished with reference to the “space as flows” imagination, the preservation of the right to control the movement of people resonates with the imagination of the essentialist notion of space as places.

While the territory of the receiving state is constructed as belonging to its citizens, this imagination simultaneously constructs others – asylum-seekers, migrants, citizens of other states – as belonging some place else. Brun (2001) notes that the essentialist understanding of the relationship between people and places have far-reaching consequences for the way solutions to the ‘refugee problem’ have been formulated. For instance, when refugees are regarded as ‘out of place’ and ‘uprooted’, their temporariness at the place of arrival is stronger. In this perspective, where everyone belongs to a certain place, a refugee can never belong to the host territory. The only solution is then to end their refugee status, either by repatriation – forced or voluntary – or by assimilation, whereby the refugee is supposed to give up his or her old identity and absorb the customs and culture of the host territory. Another manifestation of the attitude towards refugees as being ‘uprooted’ is the “right to remain at home strategy”. This policy strategy has accompanied the closing of the borders to the Western world, and it represents an interest to assist displaced people within their country of origin. Because if people are thought of as having a natural place to live, then the best way of helping them is as close as possible to their place of origin. There are risks connected to this strategy because people will be closer to the reason for displacement (conflicts, environmental disasters etc.). It also conceals the displacement problem to Northern publics since people become displaced within their own countries. This strategy has caused an increase in the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the 1990s.

The essentialist notion of belonging and place is not necessarily uniform in terms of its representations. There is a tendency within Western discourse to regard other cultures and peoples as more place-bound (Olwig – Hastrup 1997). This is connected to the common assumption to regard non-Western people as somehow closer to nature. Non-Western cultures are often thought of as closely adapted to their particular environment. Westerners are usually pictured in their own representations

of the place) is formed out of interrelations, both present in the same locality as well as interrelations stretching beyond the location itself. As Brun (2001) has observed, with this theoretical understanding of place, it makes no sense of talking about migrants and refugees as “uprooted” or “out of place”. Also, de-naturalizing the link between place and people also means that no one has a natural right to any place.

as more mobile in terms of culture; the word “ethnic” is used about other cultures, not ours. Sibley (1995: 26f) believes that the association with nature is a general feature of the classification of beings by dominant groups, and that it is associated with the history of colonialism, the rise of science and the growth of capitalism. Not only colonized people and African slaves have been subject to this association, but also women, Romani people and “native” groups. When the relationship between “us” and “them” is implicitly formulated as the relationship between “culture” and “nature” this is an indication of the dominants’ view of the relationship as asymmetrical. While the projection of a certain group as closer to nature entails exoticization and romanticization it also serves to dehumanize. Because if they are a part of nature, they are also less than human. Although the association of non-Westerners with nature was certainly more pronounced in the colonial days, when it legitimated the treatment of people as less than human and/or legitimated civilization missions since these people in their primitive state needed saving, remnants of this imagination still seems to live on. The ethnologist Oscar Pripp (2001) notes, for instance, that within Swedish society the ethnic groups that are laterally positioned with the Swedish majority in terms of socio-economic position as well as in terms of political influence are other westerners. Non-westerners are inferiorly located along a hierarchical scale. The further down a specific group is located, it tends to be increasingly regarded by the majority population as homogenous and its members’ behaviour as determined by their culture. Countering this imagination of non-westerners as more place- and culture-bound, Stuart Hall points out that societies in the periphery always have been open to Western influence. “The idea that these are ‘closed’ places – ethnically pure, culturally traditional, undisturbed until yesterday by the ruptures of modernity – is a Western fantasy about ‘otherness’: a ‘colonial fantasy’ maintained about the periphery by the West, which tends to like its natives ‘pure’ and its exotic places ‘untouched’ (1992a: 305).

The geopolitical imagination “space as places” is supportive of the idea that the host or receiving country has the right to retain control over the movement over its territory. By representing newcomers as “naturally” belonging somewhere else, migration control is further legitimized. The suggestion here is that the construction of non-Westerners as relatively more place-bound also reinforces or naturalizes the control of the movement from these parts of the world (which also happens to be the most unwanted migration).

Concluding remarks

This paper started out as an interrogation into the persistence and reinforcement of migration controls in a world commonly characterised as globalizing. Indeed, the ever more restrictive migration control regime seems paradoxical when the dominant geopolitical description emphasizes de-bordering practices and the decreased importance of territory. To gain an understanding of this seeming contradiction, I have furthered the idea of mobility as an increasingly important power resource in our time. Access to, and control over mobility has been shown to be unevenly distributed over the world according to nationality, race, gender and class. If mobility is considered a power resource, then migration control has to be understood from a global power perspective. Underscoring the inequality of mobility rights is the asymmetrical relation between mobile capital and the relative fixity of labour. This asymmetry reflects two different and contradictory geopolitical imaginations of the world; “space as flows” and “space as places”. What is suggested here is that these understandings contradict each other, yet are equally strong. Or rather, they are called upon in different contexts, thus legitimizing different things: whereas the first legitimizes measures such as the cut-down in welfare spending and the restructuring of Southern economies, the second justifies the control of immigration. Because of the co-existence of these two differing imaginations, it becomes possible to argue for trade liberalizations and immigration restrictions at the same time. It is also important to note that different people have different access to these imaginations. When Southern people call upon the first one about the right to free movement, it is automatically rejected.

Most importantly, the co-existence of these different understandings seems to weaken the already weak (cf. Massey 1999). Poor people in the Third World are not only increasingly “localized” by restrictive immigration and asylum policies, but also tend to lose control over their localities as economic globalization has justified the restructuring of their economies. The opening-up of these economies to foreign investment and the fixity of people also allows for the provision of cheap labour to foreign industries. Simultaneously, and on the other way around, the parallel geopolitical imaginations work to the benefit for the already privileged.

Still, there is no saying that this “system” will persist indefinitely. For instance, there are now negotiations within the WTO to multilaterally deregulate the movement of labour within the “Mode 4” of the GATS treaty. Another example is the more comprehensive approach towards an international agenda for migration management embodied in the “Berne initiative”. This work surely proceeds slowly and in any case only concerns certain occupations and services. However it might be that in the long run the regulation of low-skilled labour will become untenable although this vision certainly seems improbable at this point in time.

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Aalborg University

Fibigerstraede 2

DK-9220 Aalborg OE

Denmark

Phone + 45 96 35 84 38

Fax + 45 98 15 11 26

Web: <http://www.amid.dk>

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